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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/11/2016  
TAGS: PTER PREL BE TU  
SUBJECT: APPROACHING BELGIUM ON PKK TERRORISM

REF: A. BRUSSELS 1083  
B. BRUSSELS 225 C. BRUSSELS 4119

Classified By: DCM WILLIAM IMBRIE. REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: Post has worked to push appropriate Belgian ministries, including MFA, Justice, and Interior, on increasing action against Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) activities in Belgium. The Belgians want to do more and have told us that, in addition to information, increased dialogue would help facilitate their efforts to monitor and combat the PKK. In order to respond to this request, Post requests Washington send a team of officials who cover terrorism across the spectrum, including counterterrorism, law enforcement, and intelligence aspects, to consult with Belgian officials and ideally map out a strategy to combat PKK activities within the parameters of Belgium's legal and political systems (see paragraphs 4-6). Such consultations, over a one-to-two day period, might also encompass separate discussions with Turkish officials.

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Belgium Wants to Work with U.S.  
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¶2. (S) According to Belgian MFA coordinator for counter-terrorism and deputy to the MFA's political director, Andre Ceulemans, Belgian intelligence authorities monitor PKK sympathizers and supporters closely. Ceulemans has said Belgium hopes to use its 2003 antiterrorism law, criminalizing terrorist acts per se and membership in terrorist groups, as an effective tool against PKK activities. According to Ceulemans, under the law, Belgian authorities "will intervene if individuals support or promote propaganda for the PKK."

¶3. (S) In a diplomatic note dated January 9, the Belgian MFA provided an interagency-coordinated official response to our November demarche urging Belgium to act against the PKK and affiliates in Belgium. In the note, the GOB indicated Belgian authorities are formally examining whether the PKK's activities fall under the scope of the Belgian Terrorist Offence Act. The law limits the freedom of expression guaranteed under the Belgian Constitution, an issue Belgium has wrestled with in trying to address and restrict PKK activities. MFA counterterrorism officials tell us the formal review is ongoing.

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Proposed U.S.-Belgian Dialogue on PKK  
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¶4. (S) Ceulemans has consistently said Belgium could act if the U.S. were to provide more solid, specific information on the PKK threat. During our November demarche on the PKK, Ceulemans said, in addition to more specific information on individuals and organizations, more U.S.-Belgian dialogue would help facilitate Belgian efforts to monitor and combat the PKK (ref C).

¶ 5. (S) We need to take the Belgians up on this request. Accordingly, we recommend proposing consultations between U.S. and Belgian officials on the PKK. We suggest consultations in Brussels, possibly over a two-day period, that would specifically lay out our concerns and ideas, while providing us with a clearer understanding of applicable Belgian law on the PKK issue. The Washington team should include experts on the counterterrorism, intelligence, and prosecutorial fronts, who would consult with their Belgian counterparts. The hopeful outcome would be a joint U.S.-Belgian strategy for addressing PKK activities in Belgium.

¶ 6. (S) Separate meetings with the Turkish embassy in Brussels might also be useful. Post has worked to coordinate approaches to the Belgians on the PKK with Turkey, in response to Department directives. The Turks have responded by attempting to provide more information to the Belgians and keeping Embassy informed (ref A).

¶ 7. (S) Comment: Post has worked to urge Belgian pro-activeness on the PKK and our indications are the Belgians want to do more but are struggling to devise strategies within existing laws and authorities. We believe face-to-face dialogue among a range of experts will help the Belgians decide what they can do under their legal and political system in response to our specific requests.

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